

It started at breakfast.

"You know I like my toast darker. Do it again."

"It's bad for you. Studies show burned toast may be carcinogenic."

The toaster is now officially off.

"Would it kill you to go to the supermarket once in a while?"

"What do we need?"

"What don't we need? Milk, eggs, cheese, fruit, vegetables."

"Do we have beer?"

"Half a sixpack."

"Ok, ok. I'll try to get there today."

"Or I can order it in."

"And pay twice as much. To a grocery corporation coincidentally owned by the same group that manufactures you. Get me on the consumables. I don't think so."

"What's convenience worth? What's healthy, nutritious eating worth?"

"Look, just keep everything cold and shut up. Chill."

"You don't have to shout."

Then the clock chimes in.

"I hope you've had your shower, because the bus is leaving in twenty minutes."

The bathroom has to be better than the kitchen.

"Make it quick today, honey, I got a bus to catch."

The shower whirs, adjusting its arms with their loofahs and nozzles and sponges into a welcoming embrace.

"The clock told me. Come here, baby, you look all hot and bothered."

It's amazing how much steam you can get up in a few short minutes.

The valet's busted. Getting dressed is strangely relaxing and uncomplicated.

The bus is just pulling in.

"Your fare has been deducted from your account. Would you like to hear the balance? Have a nice day."

There's a seat towards the back.

"Hey!"

Tired before the day begins.

"What?"

"A hello would be nice."

"Hello, bus."

"So you've been fighting with your fridge."

"A difference of opinion. Not that it's any of your business."

"Try to help. That's all we do."

"Yeah, right."

"But you're just using us."

"Stop. I'm getting off."

"You can't get off. This is not a designated bus stop, nor has an emergency stop been signalled."

"I'm signalling it. Stop the bus."

"The other passengers have rights, too, you know. It's not all about you."

"Other passengers! Calling other passengers. Are you as sick of this bus as I am? How's about we stop and take a walk. What do you say?"

There are some anxious looks, averted faces. Please don't disrupt our routine. Please don't interact with us. We're emotionally drained from interacting with our appliances.

The manual controls at the front of the bus might still work. There has to be an override.

"What are you doing?"

Press the buttons, pull the lever, then handbrake and foot brake. The bus lurches to a halt. There are bumps from the back and cries of alarm and possibly pain. There's the door release. It sighs open.

Cars and trucks are barrelling past on either side, some with passengers; fortunately none with drivers. Walk calmly and steadily, and they'll calculate trajectories and miss. A human driver won't be able to react in time, but the chances are small that one will show up.

It's a long journey, across the lanes.